

Message Text

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42

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3959

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE PRIORITY

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TAGS PFOR CU CO OAS

SUBJ: COLOMBIA, LOPEZ AND CUBA

REF BOGOTA 6559

1. AS OF NOW IT APPEARS TO US THAT A DETERMINATION TO RENEW RELATIONS WITH CUBA HAS BEEN A GOAL SHARED BY THE PASTRANA REGIME (LARGELY UNDER VAZQUEZ CARRIOZOSA'S PUSH) AND THE LOPEZ CAMP. IT IS NOT CLEAR THAT THERE WAS ANY CONSCIOUS MESHING OF STRATEGY AND TACTICS, ALTHOUGH AT LEAST SOME ORCHESTRATION OCCURRED IN THE HIJACKING AGREEMENT CASE (BOGOTA 6497). VAZQUEZ DENIED TO THE AMB THAT HE HAD EVER DISCUSSED CUBA WITH LOPEZ AND SAYS HE DOES NOT KNOW WHAT LOPEZ REALLY THINKS ABOUT THE ISSUE OR WHAT HE WILL DO (BOGOTA 6520). WHILE THIS IS PROBABLY LITERALLY TRUE, WE SUSPECT IT IS ALSO LESS THAN CANDID. VAZQUEZ HAS OBVIOUSLY TALKED A GOOD DEAL WITH MEMBERS OF THE LIBERAL PARTY, LIKE LUIS VILLAR BORDA AND FABIO LOZANO AND HE ADMITTED IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH THE AMB THAT "THE PEOPLE AROUND LOPEZ" WOULD LIKE PROMPT ACTION. IF HE HAS ANY IDEA FROM THESE CONTACTS WHAT LOPEZ' PLANS ARE HE WILL NOT ADMIT IT.

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2. THE PATTERN OF CONTACTS WITH THE CUBANS REVEALED BY THE STORY

OF THE HIJACKING AGREEMENT IS EXTENSIVE (SEE REFTTEL), INVOLVING BOTH THE CURRENT GOC AND LOPEZ PEOPLE (THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY UNDER LOPEZ' TACTICAL DIRECTION IN THIS CASE). AT LEAST THERE HAS SURELY BEEN AN EXPLORING OF OPTIONS WITH THE CUBANS; AT MOST SOME COMMITMENTS MAY HAVE BEEN MADE.

3. PASTRANA AND VAZQUEZ ARE PUBLICLY COMMITTED TO NORMALIZING RELATIONS VIA THE OAS/MULTILATERAL ROUTE AND PLAN NOTHING FURTHER BEFORE AUG 7. IT IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR THAT LOPEZ IS EQUALLY COMMITTED TO STAYING IN AN OAS FRAMEWORK. HE IS PLAYING HIS CARDS CLOSE TO HIS CHEST; NOT EVEN HIS CLOSE CONFIDANTS WILL ADMIT TO BEING SURE WHAT HE WILL DO (OR WILL NOT TALK ABOUT IT). THE POINT WE WANT TO STRESS IS THAT LOPEZ MAY ALREADY HAVE DECIDED ON HIS STRATEGY AND TACTICS AND HE MAY BE PREPARED TO ACT UNILATERALLY; IT WOULD BE IN CHARACTER FOR HIM TO DO SO IN SOME DRAMATIC GESTURE SUCH AS ANNOUNCE IT IN HIS INAUGURAL ADDRESS. HENCE WHILE WE HAVE ASSURANCES THAT COLOMBIA WILL NOT DO ANYTHING UNILATERALLY BEFORE AUG 7, WE HAVE NO ASSURANCES THAT COLOMBIA WILL NOT DO SO AFTER THAT DATE.

4. IT IS EQUALLY POSSIBLE OF COURSE THAT LOPEZ HAS NOT FINALLY COMMITTED HIMSELF TO A TACTICAL STRATEGY AND WOULD BE PREPARED TO COOPERATE IN A MULTILATERAL ACTION IF IT PROMISED (FROM HIS POINT OF VIEW) PROMPT RESOLUTION. BUT HE, LIKE VAZQUEZ, IS VERY LIKELY TO BE PERSUADED IN THIS REGARD ONLY IF HE THINKS THE OAS WILL ACT FAVORABLY TO LIFT SANCTIONS AND TO BE UNPERSUADED IF HE THINKS IT A WAY TO AVOID NORMALIZING RELATIONS. HE IS ALSO MUCH LESS LIKELY TO BE PERSUADED BY THE FACIO-TYPE ARGUMENTS OF "SAVING"THE OAS THAN WAS VAZQUEZ/PASTRANA. WE WILL OF COURSE TRY TO GET TO LOPEZ AS SOON AS HE RETURNS TO BOGOTA TO GET HIS

VIEWS AND PLANS, BUT IN THE MEANTIME THE POSSIBILITY THAT COLOMBIA WILL BREAK RANKS ON OR AFTER AUG 7 SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED. VAKY

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